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SATIRE AND ITS CENSORS.

BY ALFRED AUSTIN.

MY SATIRE AND ITS CENSORS.

MY SATIRE AND ITS CENSORS.

BY

ALFRED AUSTIN,

AUTHOR OF "THE SEASON: A SATIRE."

Holofernes: a Schoolmaster.—But, to return to the verses; did they please you, Sir Nathaniel?

Nath.—Marvellous well.

Hol.—I do dine to-day; . . . where I will prove those verses to be very unlearned, neither savouring of wit, poetry, nor invention.

Love's Labour's Lost.

Every dunce who starves presumes to write.

Epistle of Otway to Creech.

LONDON:

GEORGE MANWARING,

8, KING WILLIAM STREET, STRAND.

1861.

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MY SATIRE AND ITS CENSORS.

In virile times when simple modes prevailed,
And honest pastimes flourished unassailed,
Youths, in the Lupercalia, naked ran—
For nought was deemed immodest in the Man.
But when a spurious Decency arrayed
The form which God in His own image made,
Imperial edicts circumscribed the Game,[1]
And fixed on age monopoly of shame.

---

[1] "Lupercalibus vetuit currere *imberbes*," says Suetonius, writing of Augustus. Mistress Quickly seems to have held opinions somewhat similar to those of the great Roman emperor, as I gather from her words to Sir John Falstaff, when that virtuous knight was wooing the wife of

700

So once the pen might human vices call
By bold bare names, the property of all;
And pedagogues and prophets rudely writ
Without the sleight of circumambient wit.
Now so corruptly chaste our ways have grown,
E'en words, turned wanton,[2] are for men alone;

---

a "gentleman living at Windsor." "Have a nay-word, that you may know one another's mind, and the boy never need to understand anything; for 'tis not good that children should know any wickedness. Old folks, you know, have discretion, as they say, and the world." This must be what is meant by a certain accomplished editor, who has spoken plainly enough in his time (but *tempora mutantur;* he had not *then* sixty thousand monthly subscribers)—when he talks of "speaking much too plain for our young readers." When may the sixty thousand —*I* am one of them—hope to peruse "The Lectures of Mr. Barnes Newcome on the Domestic Affections"? I advise him to read what Benedick says of Claudio, and think over it: "He was wont to speak plain and to the purpose, like an honest man; and now is he turned orthographer; his words are a very fantastical banquet, just so many strange dishes."

[2] Very opportunely, the other day, I stumbled on a letter

And Satire must be limited, or preach
With euphemistic modesty of speech.

Muse! most correct!—Not you, unblushing jade,
Whose too prompt patronage I lately prayed:
Not you, *décolletée* Muse! whose buxom shape
First led, then left, me in this precious scrape:
But—you, Propriety! who sit and frown
On low-dressed muses in your high-necked gown:

---

written by Miss Mary Pierrepoint, afterwards, as all the world knows, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, to Mrs. Hewet, an extract from which is much to my purpose. Here is what one lady writes to another lady:—"I was last Thursday at the new Opera, and saw Nicolini strangle a lion with great gallantry. But he represented nakedness so naturally, I was surprised to see those ladies stare at him without any confusion that pretend to be so violently shocked at a poor double entendre or two in a comedy, which convinced me that those persons who would cry 'Fie! fie!' at the *word* naked, have no scruple about the *thing*." Non meus *hic* sermo.

MY SATIRE

Not "draped discreetly in a skirt and vest
Which just withhold the secrets they suggest,"
But swathed in good thick serge whose strings are tied
All the more close the less you have to hide:
Whose knees—so lost—I cannot clasp; whose feet,
E'en as I name them, 'neath their robe retreat,
And to my wicked vision won't disclose
Even the tips of—may I say it?—toes:
Muse! so benign to Procter and to Hood,[3]
One finger give! I promise to be good.

---

[3] I have not a word to say—and, if I had, I would not say it—against either the lady or gentleman alluded to in the text. But would they mind asking the *Athenæum*, for their own sakes, not to make them ridiculous with its extravagant compliments? Both are writers of very elegant verse, purveyors of prettinesses which even I should admire, if we had not of late had rather too much of these. What with spasmodic poets on the one side, and sentimental poetesses on the other, the public may be

Or if the tenth part of a tender touch
Be from Maid-Muse familiar overmuch,
Whisper to Hepworth Dixon you forgive,
And Dixon's deputy will bid me live.
Never again my "whip of fire"[4] shall gash
Vices stripped naked for the needed lash,
But be extinguished in a copious flood
Scourged from my own too-tempted boyish blood.

---

excused its present aversion from the sight of any book each of whose lines commences with a capital letter. The words of Garin d'Apchier, writ so long ago, again become significant—"Les jongleurs se sont multipliés au point qu'il y en a tout autant que de lapins dans une garenne: on en est inondé." They would be fair game for any sporting pen, if unfortunately like the "lapins," they were not "game" at all."

[4] What a "whip of fire" may be I really cannot say: *I* have not one. But this couplet and the ten ensuing lines will become more intelligible by a reference to a critique which I have inserted in full at the end of the book: *vide* Appendix.

Henceforth my brain shall labour languid lays
Bowring might write, and Jeaffreson might praise:
Sonnets [5] be mine which nobody can hurt,
Chorley might write and Wentworth Dilke insert.

---

[5] Fortunately, the *Athenæum* does not leave us (otherwise bewildered bards) quite in the dark as to what it considers real poetry; for it occasionally inserts sonnets on its own account. I will reproduce one which appeared on the same day and on the page exactly opposite to that on which "The Season" was pronounced "a little satire."

"How has the mighty power that ruled the earth
For many, many ages, lost its sway?
And those gigantic chains which owed their birth
To ignorance, been snapped and cast away?
'Tis that Philosophy's bright hour is come
Man to emancipate from Papal Rome,
Since Papal Rome has lost her ancient boast
Among the advanced to be advanced the most:
And now a heavy mud-locked wreck is lying,
Whilst thousand busy sails are by her flying,
And heralding love, light, and liberty:
Destined for every land, o'er every sea,
They speed triumphant and rejoicingly,
Freeing the slave and welcomed by the free."

Now, so long as even the *Athenæum* can spontaneously

Bees, swallows, wagtails, milk-and-water warm,
And all that *must* do far more good than harm,
On themes like these my lines shall spend their
force,
And leave sins, men, and women to the "coarse."[6]
What!—when the pulpit decorates its blame,
And lets the shameless free for fear of shame,

---

and approvingly insert such doggerel as this, one can never be sure that somebody or other will not think quite so meanly of it as oneself. But whatever latitude must be conceded to defective taste, none can be extended to defective grammar. We all submit to the despotism of Lindley Murray; and one of his edicts is, that a verb must agree with its nominative case in number and person. How the *Athenæum* will reconcile with this rule the remarkable inquiry, "How *has* those gigantic chains been snapped and cast away?" I leave it to explain. But, to be frank, syntax is not more violently outraged than is prosody in this shambling sonnet.

[6] Frankness requires that I should own that the epithet "coarse" has been applied to some of the lines in "The Season" by more than one critic. Mrs. Barrett Browning provides me with a reply, in words

Prunes the linguistic liberties of Luke
And smiles on knaves emasculate rebuke:
When scented priests admonish scoffing men
With most polite periphrasis of pen,

---

more forcible than I can hope ever to write, at the 105th page of the fifth edition of "Aurora Leigh:"—

> "Am I coarse?
> Well, Love's coarse, Nature's coarse . . . .
> We fair, fine ladies, who park out our lives
> From common sheep-paths, cannot help the crows
> From flying over,—we're as natural still
> As Blowsalinda. Drape us perfectly
> In Lyons velvet,—we are not, for that,
> Lay-figures, look you: we have hearts within,
> Warm, live, improvident, indecent hearts,
> As ready for outrageous ends and acts
> As any distressed sempstress of them all."

If the discussion of one's species is to be tabooed,—if Pope was altogether in the wrong, and "the proper study of mankind is" *not* "man," let us know, by all means. But so long as the old doctrine stands, I and a few more of us intend to express our meaning in the simplest language we can get hold of, not being able "to cog like lisping hawthorn buds, that come like women in men's apparel."

Make matters pleasant with a Hell[7] disguised,
And hawk about a Gospel compromised:
When mighty journals emulate to lull
Uneasy dreamers and delude the dull;—
Of suppurating sores, that ulcerate
And draw the life-blood from the soundest state,
As "social evils" elegantly prate:
When monthly moralists their periods trim,
Or with genteel complacent synonym

---

[7] For fear of misinterpretation, I must avow my sympathy with Uncle Toby's sorrow ("'I'm sorry for it,'" said Uncle Toby) at the announcement of the Devil being "damned long ago." But hell is not quite a place to be played with. If there be no such place at all, let us hear no more about it: but if there be, somebody will have to go there: and "somebody" had better be told of his prospects in the plainest language possible. One hears it said: "If the Devil does not get so-and-so, where is the use of keeping a Devil?" This is logical. But perhaps clergymen, too, are more logical than would at first sight appear: doubtless, they see no reason why the Devil should not be entitled to a sinecure as well as themselves.

Hint, but to hide, of poisons which infect
With fertile venom the uncircumspect,
And worming through the blameless and the best,
Blast the poor babe reliant at the breast:
And when Society applauds this plot
To make each thing appear the thing it's not,
Shall some "young gentleman" our ears invade
With short sharp words, and call a spade a spade?—
Lift the light gauze which, accurately nice,
Divides approved Propriety from Vice?
Wake, snoring scribes! Ye varlets! do ye hear?
Up from your straw each drowsy garreteer!
Propriety and printers' devils call:
Pluck your own quill and plunge it in your gall.

Extend your necks, each interrupted goose,
And quack me quick five shillings' of abuse.[8]

Stop—stop! says Cynic: shall a goose's quack
Move you to hit so fast and fiercely back?
Leave them: their necks will twisted be anon;
Is 't not enough to pity and pass on?
To simple eyes it seems a sorry sport
To flip at things whose cackle is so short.

Not quite so short as not to need the knout:
Errors, like geese, beheaded run about.

---

[8] *Sir Toby Belch.*—"Go, write. . . . . It is no matter how witty it is, so it be full of invention. . . . . If thou *thou'st*" (*this* young gentleman, *this* youth, *this* youthful satirist, eh?)—"if thou *thou'st* him some thrice, it shall not be amiss; and as many lies as will lie on thy sheet of paper set 'em down. Let there be gall enough in thy ink; though thou write with a goose-pen, no matter." —*Twelfth Night.*

Yet not with some poor hack I warfare wage,
Nor could a M——y move my pen to rage.
But little fame, and pleasure less, redounds
To turn and flog these yelping garret-hounds.
Easy my nature; and they widely err
Who think I care to castigate a cur.
But, when the public judgment, all astray,
Mistakes the mongrel's snarl for bloodhound's bay,
Between the cackle which once saved a state,
Now cries for food, doth not discriminate,—
'Tis time indeed to scramble to one's feet,
Feel for the scourge, and terrify the cheat.
Oh! would some hand, more intimate than mine,
Uncloak these knaves and wield the knotted line,
How gladly I such office would eschew,
To linger, darling! indolent, with you!
Say, Bailey! with your hurricane of words,
Why not arise and scare these forward herds?

Or you, Dobell! impervious too long,
Fling off this torpor, and assume the thong.
Smith! from your sullen reticence emerge!
Sure, you can wield retributory scourge?
Or Massey! with your nervous sense of wrong,
Turn on these whelps and vindicate your song.
I rather far, supine, would fling me where
Long lazy sedges loll against the air;
Or, now that leaves are green by Greta's side,
Invoke the quiet never yet denied,
And, lost to crowds, in honeysuckled haunt
Live, hidden hero of my own romaunt.

What can seduce from these the sober mind
Back to the vulgar quarrels of its kind?
'Chance I shall be, once cozened into strife,
A literary athlete all my life.

Vindictive foes will dog me till I die,
For they who cannot conquer can belie.
Engaging prospect! to parade, the mark
Of each bruised mouth that slanders in the dark.

Well, let them slander: but so long as Youth
Stands firm, my friend, I'll give a tongue to Truth.
Let others dread the dirks they cannot see,
And think it decent to submit or flee:
Let Meredith[9] be cowed, or sybaritic,
Light his cheroot with blunders from the *Critic;*

---

[9] Had I been aware, when I published "The Season," of the rude onslaught then meditated and since made by some critics on Owen Meredith, I would have expressed my opinion of "Lucile" in more measured terms. But these same gentlemen who extolled that Poem to the skies are, for some reason or other best known to themselves, now decrying its author in a language all their own. I, who thought it right to protest against the immoderate jubilation uttered over a not very original,

At worst, I shield my *back* against the wall,
And bide the brunt of any or of all!
Shame on the boy, effeminate, who loves
To strike and back be stricken but with gloves;
Shame more on him, who, flippant, in the sun,
Recks not if Man's Great Fight be lost or won;
Beside some sunny river dreams aloof,
Nor heeds the river's eloquent reproof!
O Boy! it urges, Come with me along,
A stream no more, but broad and swift and strong.

---

though certainly very clever, novel in rhyme, think it also right to protest against the yet more indecent attacks upon the accomplished writer of the "Serbski Pesme." The man who wrote the "Psalm of Confession" will, I trust, excuse me for saying that he owes it to himself, to the name he bears, and to the country which is proud of that name, to do something better than allow himself to be flattered by Mr. Thackeray into spurring with his verses the slackening sale of the *Cornhill Magazine;* for he has shown himself capable of producing poems quite beyond the mental digestion of monthly readers.

I loved the hills where, tiny tarn, I lay
Screened from the rude intrusion of the Day:
I loved their patient slopes whose outstretched arms
Saved me, too confident, from courted harms,
Guiding my steps uncertain, till they grew
Firmer and not so devious, then withdrew:
I loved the bright broad meadows where I played,
I loved the woodland's transitory shade:
I loved the lawns where bevies of fair girls,
Pure as their robes though frolic as their curls,
Tripped down from where along the trellised wall
They trained their plants, themselves outblooming all,
Flowers o'er my pathway prodigally cast,
Coaxed me to stay but praised me as I passed.
Labour expects me on the banks below:
O lagging Boy! pursue me as I go!

Me many a solemn embassage awaits,
Me the swarmed concourse of impatient freights:
To me the palpitating cities call
To bear the benefits of each to all.
Limpid no more, I rush to court assoil,
Proud of the stains of decorating Toil,
Where splendid burthens dropping on my breast
Dismiss me blessing, and avouch me blest.
Onwards I go, to greet the whelming tide,
The sad supremacy of self denied,
Solicitous no more, since soon to be
One with the vague unutterable Sea!

So sings the river through the summer days,
And I, submissive, follow what I praise.
What if my "boyish blood" would rather stay
Where lawns invite, where bonnibels delay,

Though but a "youth" and not averse from these,
To conflict called, I abdicate my ease,
Bend to some honest work before I go,
And prove that verse can utilize its flow.
And since impostors most advancement stem,
Come on, proud verse! we'll have a sweep at THEM.

To Chelt'nham once, in search of food and fame,
A discontented counter-jumper came.
With little schooling, but still less to eat,
And driven wild by hunger and conceit,
To sate the one, at nights he tossing lay
Groaning in labour of a five-act Play;
The days, to stop his stomach, clothe his back,
"Turnover," printer's devil, useful Jack:

Then raised from simple Jack to splendid John,
Wrote penny libels for the "Looker-on."

At last, this Play, as garret gossip goes,
Cut from the brain with long Cæsarian throes,
Muled in the press, unfurnished with a caul,
And met the gaze—a "Eunuch,"[10] after all!
O luckless baptism! What malicious friend
Prompted this name, prophetic of its end?
Not even hissed nor hustled out of sight,
This half-got creature never ran a night.
All thought it dead and damned, when lo! anon,
Appeared a notice in the "Looker-on."[11]

---

[10] The name of the Play with which our editor commenced his literary (?) career, and of which the "Looker-on" asserted that there never was such a play since the days of William Shakspere.

[11] Whether the "Looker-on" have met the fate of "The Eunuch" or still exist, transferred to London,

"Britons! rejoice!" in flaring type it said:
"Britons! rejoice! the Drama is not dead!
No more for Shakspere, Beaumont, Otway, weep,
Let Farquhar, Fletcher, unlamented sleep:
No more Rowe, Dryden, Massinger, regret,
Your tears restrain! the Drama liveth yet!
THESPIS again shall lofty minds engage
And with 'The Eunuch' vindicate the Stage!"

The gobemouche folks of Cheltenham, amazed,
Read first the critique, then the Play it praised!
A fool might write it: folly never ends:
But, devil 's in 't, another fool commends.

---

under a metropolitan and Latinized name, I cannot say. One sometimes sees, on the table, at Whig clubs a weekly journal, whose style of criticism smacks strongly of the Cheltenham periodical.

Who could explain? When, lo! an office scrub
Peached on his fellow: "Cease your heads to rub.
Same fool, good folks! And somewhat fools are you,
To doubt that he who wrote it puffed it too!"

Warned to adopt less dangerous disguise,
This mole, unearthed, to darker London flies,
Where skulking things may crouch and crawl about,
And no one cares to stoop and pull them out.
Say, slums and purlieus at the back of Strand!
To what low shifts this fellow turned his hand;
By what admixture of obsequious gait,
With skilled impertinence and braggart prate,
Up to the stool which once he dusted crept,
And swayed the office that he lately swept;
Till, fitly recompensed, he came to be
The *Athenæum's* Editor, you see.

Discerning Age! which, logical throughout,
Pensions a crètin, curtseys to a lout:
Which, tolerant of quacks in verse and prose,
Endures a Dixon and endows a Close.[12]
O great King Pepple! yet one favour more
Confer on Britain, ere you quit her shore.
One form is wanting to your classic crew:
You take our Poet—take our Critic too!
Though Bishops mourn, yet England, little loth,
Makes you a parting present of them both.

---

[12] Does the Noble Lord at the head of Her Majesty's Government intend to resist Mr. Stirling's motion, as insolently as he answered Mr. Stirling's speech, on the pension granted to the Poet Laureate of the King of Bonny? I advise the flippant Viscount to resist it as a vote of want of confidence in Her Majesty's Ministers; and then to go to the country on the cry of "Pepple! Cheap Paper, and the General Interests of Literature!" If I may judge from the reverend names appended to the Laureate's "testimony to character," he will have the support of the bishops and some of the clergy.

Degraded Genius! stooping to the yoke
Of annual pence and some pert Premier's joke,
Once and for all these shameful links discard!
Let verse, like Virtue, be its own reward!
Dismiss, with scornfully impartial frown,
Snarls from the gutter, guerdons from the Crown.
And you, The Public! fooled by Prophets veiled,
Fouler than He at whom Khorassan paled,
O'er-rid by scribbling spectres smeared with ink,
Break from your bondage, and presume to think!

Can malice, think ye, prompt a poet's pen
To deal so heavily with men, *as men?*—
Or some unsettled whining after fame
Denounce the dullards who deny one's claim?—
A selfish, stupid vanity incite
An unacknowledged satirist to write?

Deem ye no honest motive can engage
The muse, reluctant, in satiric rage?
Gods! when a parcel of unlettered boors,
Brought up in village schools or city sewers,
A hack on trial or a clerk dismissed,
A jaded author, spavined journalist,
Hiding—they well may hide—from public sight,
Wrapping their rags about them as they write,
Helped by this secrecy, the world mislead,
Can none expose them but for spite or greed?
When nameless charlatans, for weekly pence,
Abetted by the public indolence,
Keep up this farce, with domino and din,
May not a man be angry and not sin?
Why may not he, who dares, invade their ranks,
And pluck the masks from off these mountebanks?

I choose their chief. Look! Judge ye from this best,
What literary lepers are the rest!

Yet naked more this mummer must be stripped:
Stand round, ye subalterns! and watch him whipped.
"No youth can wield the lash?" Then bare your back!
Methinks I *have* the castigator's knack:
And little doubt I, sirrah! but that you,
After the few first strokes, will think so too.

Most of your pranks, obscure to eye and ear,
Escape detection, so arraignment here.
Could I hunt out the meannesses you hide,
My lash would then, I own it, be defied.

Hiding in holes for most part, you emerge
But once or twice, to justify the scourge.
At length, encouraged by the awkward praise
An Editor exacts from hacks he pays,
Boldly you tread, illiterate and rude,
Where scholars scarcely venture to intrude:
Unskilled in science, language, art, you maul
The Life of Him, supremely skilled in all.

Open this Life.[13] What words at first engage
The vision, vagrant o'er the title-page?

---

[13] Well may the *Edinburgh Review*, whose opinion even the editor of the *Athenæum* can neither buy nor bully, call "The Personal History of Lord Bacon" "ideal vapour" and "eccentric rhapsody," and be astounded at the "coarse, vulgar taste" which it displays. Misled, however, by the author's assertion on the title-page, that he is "Of the Inner Temple," it accuses him of the ingenuity of an "advocate." Advocate, forsooth! When a man appends such a tail, in order to fly his name before the

One sees — one looks again: — one thinks to err—
The "Inner Temple" called to character!
Why, man! who ever doubted you could dine,
Or drink, unwitting, execrable wine?
Because a scullion can extract a cork,
And wield, if vulgarly, a knife and fork,
Shall we not laugh if, swaggering where he sits,
The boor mistake his stomach for his wits?
Oh! what a ragged wardrobe must yours be
Who with such garb would screen deformity!
Doff these false feathers, you transparent fool!
Back to your scissors, lexicon, and stool.

---

public, it is only right to remind them that any man is entitled to dub himself "Of the Inner Temple" by eating *thirty-six* dinners, if he have a degree; *seventy-two* if he have not. The author of "The Personal History of Lord Bacon" had, of course, to eat the larger number. "O dura messorum ilia!"

Clandestine, as before, elude the knot:
If screened secure, not flogged because forgot.

'Tis said when authorlings begin to write,
They mostly keep their own dear selves in sight.
One instance more approves the saying true:
This king of critics is the thing he drew.
Reach down his dusty Drama from the shelf,
This hapless "Eunuch," and behold himself!
Powerless himself, he plots 'gainst all who can
Fulfil the mental functions of the Man.

What is this *Athenæum*, that pretends
To damn its foes and canonize its friends?
This pope pretentious that would fain impart
Dogmas on Science, Literature, and Art?

Time was when, boy before its mystic shrine,
No knee was bent more credulous than mine.
Its dread anathemas, its solemn curse,
On prose heretical, schismatic verse,
Its benedictions, pompously bestowed
On novel orthodox and faithful ode,
These did I hear hebdomadally fall
On blessed or banned, and lent my faith to all.
Ay, and there was—ah! simple days!—a time
When I first felt, and trembled into rhyme.
Guess how my boyish energies were raised!
For if it did not criticise—it praised.
But somehow, as the years stole on, I came
Slightly to question, then to doubt, its claim.
I read with marvel and a sense of wrong,
The "Golden Legend" was a sorry song:
That he whose strains like woodland waters roll
Had not the singer's symphony of soul;

Whilst the "Green Leaves" of Mackay's summer
lay
Should know no Autumn, but be green for aye:
With horror read, decreed for us to use,
A Chorley's sonnets, models of the Muse:
Started to hear, though Bulwer could but claim
Cold recognition from the nod of Fame,
Not in its eyes could Dixon pilfer ill,
Nor nonsense ooze from Doran's shallow quill.
My creed began to slacken till, I trow,
I grew the sceptic that you see me now.

Terror of "Minor Minstrels!"[14] This the
part
Shaped out for "Science—Literature—and Art!"

---

[14] With the affectation of superciliousness which is the exclusive property of "beggars on horseback," the *Athenæum* generally devotes a column of second-hand

Is this the upshot of your threats and noise—
To fall, like Winkle, upon little boys?
As leeches seize, their appetite to cloy,
On maiden prostrate, or on helpless boy;
When plunged in salt, how impotent they lie!
Their office, now—to vomit, writhe, and die.
So "Minor Minstrels" are its critic's prey
Until some hand, more powerful than they,
The nasty, slimy animals submit
To the sharp savour of surprising wit.

Sometimes, its critics—Mudie[15] having bought,
Half-price, the volumes which had cost them nought—

puns to "Minor Minstrels." I scarcely need quote at length the scene in "Pickwick," where Mr. Winkle, having announced that he is "going to begin," throws off his coat and waistcoat and makes a "terrific onslaught on two small boys."

[15] Recourse is frequently had to the book-stalls in

Dine off their author (fifteen-pence, a head),
Whom they have sold, reviewed, done all but—
read;
And then, by some caprice of kindly Fate,
Take Brompton 'bus, to wait upon the great.
To block the stairs, perhaps to reach the door,
Dance with a wall-flower, occupy a bore,
Look on at whist—if wanted, make up one—
To sneak to supper when the rest have done,
Eat melted ices, drink the lees of wine,
To swear, perhaps to think, them both divine:

Holywell Street (now, I am informed, known under the name of "Booksellers' Row"), where you may often see exposed for sale, at considerably reduced prices, the works of our best living writers, a few days after publication. Did Horace live now-a-days, it would be quite useless for him to pray, "Nulla taberna meos habeat neque *pila* libellos!"—for the modern critic would sell him remorselessly in the foulest market in order to satisfy the exigencies of protracted fasting.

Then to tramp back to Fleet Street in the night—
No 'busses now his recklessness invite—
Solicited to joys he can't afford,
By Hansoms chaffed, by loiterers implored:
To reach his garret, mounting break his shin,
To find his fire gone out, his bill come in:
Describe the "splendid banquet, converse gay,"
And thus, with venal, lying pen, repay
His lengthened evening's paradise of pain,
The chilly welcome and the warm champagne,
Expense of going, grief of getting back:
These the light duties of the scribbling hack.
As geese, designed for Strasbourg's noble pies
In which the crust expected is to rise,
Have free permit to gobble, gorge, and stuff,
So are these critics pampered for their puff.
Yet, when the supper and the praise are weighed,
Their meanest patron is but ill repaid.

Their halt, though stilted, periods betray
They eat for hunger, and applaud for pay.
In their cold calling, native wit is lost:
So port turns dull and muddy under frost!
  Some from obscure, dissenting, country town,
Flushed with a parish grammar-school renown,
Rush up to London, thither phrenzy-hurled,
To rouse the nation and amaze the world!
With eye prophetic, paint the crowds that pour
Around their publisher's importuned door,
Read and send home the journals' boundless praise,
Wreathe for themselves anticipated bays,
And stand awhile in Dreamland's splendid doubt
To take a peerage or be great without.
Who shall describe their ignorant amaze
When first they find no Firm will read their lays?

They then write "leaders," not the *Post* will
print,
Suggest a scheme—Smith says, there's nothing
in't:
Make plays, make pantomimes—rejected, all:
Coin farces, leave them, and are asked to
call:
And after long rebuffs, rude words, doors slammed,
Get a farce acted; go to see it—damned!
The time has come. Now, neophytes no more,
Themselves unfit, they hate those fit to soar;
And to their shame and supper partial grown,
The *Athenæum* claims them for its own.

So criminals, condemned to pay the price
Of painful death for long career of vice,
By turning hangmen, yet themselves may save
The culprit's scaffold and the felon's grave.

Some too there be, frail worshippers of Fame—
And these I pity, though I needs must blame—
Who, would they, when unrecognized, but wait,
Might grace their epoch, and themselves be great.
Alas! worn out by patience and by pain,
They yield, and prostitute their pen for gain;
More and more barren wane from day to day,
Till Genius, outraged, sighs and steals away.
As pointers trained to hint where coveys hide
'Neath heather-clump, or tangled bracken-side,
If after rabbits left to ramble loose
Spoil their fine scent and abdicate their use,
So men, designed by nature to reveal
Clandestine secrets for their country's weal,
When once with lower purpose bent on greed,
Forfeit the nobler instincts of the breed!

Yet, Heaven be thanked! some critics still there be,
Blame not for pique, commend without a fee;
Redeem, with proud hereditary taste,
An art so noble, though so much debased:
Who wield, responsible, the censor's pen
Like well-bred educated gentlemen.
So long as courteous Hutton condescends
To vindicate his foes, rebuke his friends;
Whom public smile nor private fondling moves
To puff the rubbish that his sense reproves:
So long as Sotheby, scrupulous, shall sit,
In sportive judgment on a rival's wit,
And, patient of his own neglected lays,
Commend a poet with a poet's praise:
And classic Hannay, in the scorn of greed
Writing too well for more than few to read,

On smaller brows sees bays profusely thrown
A juster age had placed upon his own,
The Critic's Art shall hold its wonted place,
Nor even dunce nor Dixon quite disgrace.

Here would I gladly end. But since I seek
The public countenance, not "Once a Week,"
And, prone to fallow meditation, shrink
"All the Year Round" from running into ink;
Whose mind's gestation is, as labours go
In days so strangely rapid, somewhat slow;
Who, "Youth" 'tis true, not passionate for pelf,
Care—most of all—to cultivate myself,
But still, at decent intervals, intend
To strive to make Humanity my friend;
Who will not—though the Gods know best—
perhaps
Resume my pen till fruitful years elapse;

Let me, before I lay it down, declare
A rage, I trust, all honest souls will share.

There is a race who labour to be smart,
To conquer nature with the tricks of art:
Just as fat, awkward boys, arrived in town,
Seek Savile Row, to smooth their roughness down.
With them, all things are "funny:" Earth 's a
"drag;"
The Sun, "facetious," and the Moon, a "wag."
Life is a "joke;" the world, a "top you flog,"
Spring, "lively;" morning frost, "you dog, you
dog!"
A fire has "idiosyncrasies," and "drop
Hot tears" thereon from every "passionate
chop."
Oysters are "delicate bivalves:" toasted cheese
Is "burning yellow lava," if you please.

Uncle and boy they "curiously" style
"Avuncular relation," "juvenile."[16]
Exquisite humour! E'en as I transcribe,
I drop my pen, and press my panting side.

O Dickens! Dickens! yours this flimsy brood:
They kept by you, and you by them kotoued.
They call you Demi-god: you think it true:
First you feed them, and then they slaver you.
Fast for an article, a place to dine,
They crib your jokes the while they drain your wine.
Can you not see, collected round your chair,
These base Delilahs cutting off your hair?

---

[16] Quoted, verbatim, from an article written by one of our most popular litterateurs, now the Editor of (I am told) a very successful Monthly.

They do not tell you that the crowd, whose call
Welcomed your rise, are weeping o'er your fall:
That they, whose approbation is the meed
Alone worth having, long since ceased to read:
That they who oft have "Pickwick" fondly kept
Under their sickly pillow as they slept,
Ready to comfort should they chance awake,
Make them neglect the throb, forget the ache:
Who read and read—nor marked the night go by—
To know if Paul would live, if Nelly die,
Crouched by the twilight window, book in hand,
Despite a mother's warning, sire's command,
Then as the shadows broadened o'er the park,
Intrigued for candles long before 'twas dark,
To learn if—errors, blindness, perils passed—
Agnes should weep on David's heart at last:

They do not hint that such—and I am one—
Skipped Dorrit's woes, and yawned at Meagles' fun,
Toiled on and on for sake of auld lang syne,
Or desperate flung you down, and madly rushed to dine.

Well, take your choice. Revere your heart and brain,
Or make both lacqueys to the lust of gain.
Write, print, and publish, when ye 've nought to say,
Like what must not be even named for pay.
Weigh out the monthly shilling's worth of wit,
And measure if the length of grief be writ.
Nay—as if not enough by these you sank—
Degrade the Author to the mountebank!

Enter the lists of grinning showmen with
A Paul, a Woodin, or an Albert Smith.
Do all you can to lower in our eyes
The noblest calling underneath the skies.

O restless Boy! O heart unhappy here!
Soul soaring upward far beyond your sphere!
Where are the men whose honours and estate
Leave you no peace, but prompt you to be great?
The proud results of abnegated ease
To vex the quiet of the summer trees?
A sister's pride, a mother's partial face,
Friend's loyal grasp, bright bonnibel's embrace,
Are far more cheaply bought, when gained more dear
Than ill-writ praise from starving pamphleteer.
Be warned, be wise. Oh! answer me, what gains
To live a Russell or to die a Baines?

Urge you that such as theirs is not the height
Which makes you work by day and weep by night,
You, resolute, would storm th' Olympian vault,
And carry Fame, repugnant, by assault.
Well then, suppose that distant summit won,
Ambition ended, Life's long business done.—
And then? A panegyric in the *Times*,
A tear from *Jeames*, from *Punch* some vapid rhymes:
Mayhap—I gladly give it you—a tomb
In yonder Abbey's cold and cheerless gloom:
To have—O sweet and soothing sense of pride!—
The honour Milton, Byron, was denied:
An epitaph in true sepulchral style,
Aimed at a tear and answered with a smile:
War-office pity for your bastard son,
For his poor mother, place and pity none—

Here, take them all! Had *I* such boons to grant,
You should not long intrigue, and push, and pant.
Welcome to statesmen's baubles, scribes' abuse,
The Philanthrope's renown, the hemlock's juice!

Yet it is hard to watch the years slip by
And stand as far as ever from the sky,
Wasting beneath the consciousness of powers
To win Life's chaplet were Life's chance but ours;
Thirst with the unslaked passion to enjoy,
To feel the playfulness yet lack the toy:
To know, if came He now, we straight could claim
In Praise a friend, an intimate in Fame.
No, say—would greet Her, if of Her possessed,
Like some sweet girl and strain her to our breast,
Would lose our senses in excess of bliss,
Pay throb with throb and kiss reward with kiss,

Whilst they who saw would surely not upbraid
The spendthrift boy and unresisting maid,
But only say with charitable tongue,
"'Tis but the privilege of being young!
Not that incongruous sight we sometimes see,
Full-bosomed Fame on Impotency's knee!"

Alas! they will not trust us when we're young;
And when they trust us, Time has tamed our tongue.
Gone the fierce Faith that lets not others doubt—
Gone the brave Hope that puts distrust to rout—
Gone the warm Charity that hides from view
Not *our* faults only, but our neighbours' too—
Gone the illusion which alone enthralls—
"Take all you wanted."—"All I wanted, palls!

The pangs of painful waiting filled the void,
The Banquet comes—too late to be enjoyed!"

Of the rewards which human toils befall,
The Poet's portion is the worst of all.
Dragging, through ruts and up the dusty lanes,
With patient sweat, the dull reluctant wains,
The thoughtful hind with leaves bedecks his beast,
And so protects him from the flies, at least.
But, on the Bard who, yoked to sluggard team,
Does the World's work, whate'er the World may deem,
Should bays be placed to make his toil less sore,
These dungfly critics only buzz the more.
Well, let them buzz their worst: for larger gains,
They little reck, remunerate his pains.

O dowried Poet! Earth and Heaven combine
To blend their glories, and to make them thine.
For *me,* Spring dries her tears—those sweet alarms,—
Conquers her coyness, and unveils her charms:
For me, the corn, arrayed by Autumn's hand,
Sways on the lap of the delighted land,
Just as—the day-toils over—you may see
A fair-haired, frolic girl on some proud father's knee:
For me, when Summer's festal day is done,
In regal splendour goes away the Sun,
King with the purple glories round him furled,
Flinging his farewell largesse o'er the world:
For me the Moon looks down where late He shone,
Like yearning mother towards the boy that's gone;
Or, when the hours are equal, doth arise
As He is blustering in the western skies,

And with her dignified, calm, matron frown,
Gazes his proud and petulant boyhood down
For me on singing brooks and silver meres,
Through beechen branches diffidently peers,
As a fair novice through a convent grille,
On passing pageant timid glance will steal,
Eager to eye but fearful to reveal:
The spoiled and froward Ocean, all for me,
Now coaxed to love, now fretting to be free,
With fume-fringed, scornful lip, and fierce delight,
Hurls back defiance to rebuking Night,
Then, petted babe on partial parent's breast,
On the soft sand-slope sobs itself to rest.

This is My wealth: and this, thank Heaven! is such
Statesmen can't tax, and critics cannot touch.

My real Life is spent in other sphere
From that in which I dance and chatter here.
The Angel's Sword, the Exile's stern decree,
That does not flame, this was not passed for me:
For me the Golden Gates stand open still,
I enter in and roam through Eden when I will.

APPENDIX.

FROM THE *ATHENÆUM*, APRIL 20, 1861.

A little satire is a dangerous thing for a youthful writer who is apt to forget—in both senses—that he is a *young gentleman*. We do not deny that many vices of 'The Season' may need lashing with a whip of fire, and that it is very tempting to see them stripped almost naked for it. But it requires great art, experience and wisdom to do this rightly. No youth can wield the lash. He cannot unite the delicacy of touch with the strength of arm. We do not deny that this author's intention was honest; it may be only the fault of boyish blood that he has done far more harm than good. Nor do we deny that his satire contains powerful lines, and here and there hints of poetry; as, where he calls a Beauty the "wandering sunshine of a country side"; but the spirit of the thing is essentially coarse. We find the author disgusts us with himself rather than with the sins he describes. Also, when he smites Vice on

the cheek, he does it in a way that must call the red up in the face of Virtue. This is the fatality of a youthful satirist, who is on the most flattering terms with himself as he stands smirkingly before the mirror of consciousness, and traces his likeness to Byron. We are not inclined to be severe with this young gentleman; but we must warn him that he has not "caught up the whole of life and uttered it."

THE END.

Just Published, Price Five Shillings.

THE SEASON:

A SATIRE.

BY

ALFRED AUSTIN.

WITH FRONTISPIECE OF "THE MODERN MUSE," BY THOMAS GEORGE COOPER.

Slender.—Why do your dogs bark so? be there bears i' th' Town?

Anne Page.—I think there are, Sir! I heard them talked of.

Slender.—I love the sport well; . . . but the women have so cried and shrieked at it, that it passed.

Merry Wives of Windsor.

LONDON:
GEORGE MANWARING,
8, KING WILLIAM STREET, STRAND.
1861.

THE SEASON:

A SATIRE,

BY ALFRED AUSTIN.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

"Mr. Austin has prefixed to his poem a dictum of J. S. Mill's, that the diseases of society can only be prevented or cured by being spoken about in plain language. He has certainly acted up to his motto. There are some verses of extraordinary force and vigour.

* * * * *

This last line—'Till the half-drunk lean over the half-dressed,' is worthy of Byron. We anticipate a much better performance from the author, when his power becomes more mature, when his views of life are more broad, and when he has learnt that the Season has more phases than the one he has confined his attention to."—LITERARY GAZETTE.

"The motto prefixed to this Satire is, to a certain extent, its justification. Mr. Mill has said, in his 'Political Economy,'—'The diseases of society can, no more than corporal maladies, be prevented or cured without being spoken about in plain language.' On this hint the present satirist has spoken in very plain language, of the follies and vices of the day. For

ourselves, to whom England's growth in virtue and honour is not identical with the increase of her material wealth and ostentatious luxury, we are but too glad when honest indignation makes some good verses against high-flying vices.

"Still it is to be regretted that Mr. Austin has not, in a more masterful way, 'shown vice in its own image.' He has given sufficient proof here that he could have done it. 'The Season' and its votaries would have borne a sharper and a firmer handling—they should also have been treated with an eye for masculine vices, as well as for those shared with or common among women. The peculiarly disgusting vanity and selfishness of the whole genus '*Languid Swell*,' for instance, would have been a fine subject for Mr. Austin's lash. While he chose to 'lay on,' few would cry 'hold! enough!' We must also add that Mr. Austin is a little too hard on what are called the amiable coquetries of the sex. But, as he tells us he is young, we hope that he will outgrow the injustice of youth, while he matures his powers of observation and of satirical denunciation. Society will profit by it. That he can appreciate and describe true womanly loveliness is clearly shown by the few lines about a young girl fresh from the country, in her first 'season.' These are the best."—GLOBE.

"Mr. Austin evidently considers himself the Juvenal of the present age; and certainly, if he lacks something of the fire, the wit, and the delicacy* of the old Roman, he is none the worse as a representative of the times in which he lives. He gives us a portrait of his Muse by way of frontispiece—a very *espiègle* young person engaged before a looking-glass in some of those occult mysteries of the toilet, to which

* Heaven save the mark! I should be glad to have a *delicate* edition of Juvenal.—A.A.

Hamlet refers when he upbraids the sex with painting their faces.

"The 'Satire' is very nicely printed, and we have no doubt has already served to amuse the 'wits and belles' of Tyburnia and Belgravia—for whose special delectation it has evidently been designed—each 'curled and scented darling' no doubt vehemently applauding those lines in which his or her dearest and most detested friends are hit the hardest. Mr. Austin dresses up his 'Satire' quite in the approved style. He begins by invoking the Muse, and goes on to divulge why he has followed the bent of his own inclinations, and has *not* done what certain friends eagerly advised him to do; such as—

'Compete with Meredith,' &c.

"Not an unkindly satirist is Mr. Austin. He says: 'Let me lash the follies that I love,' and immediately proceeds to give an illustration of his mode of doing this, by telling how,

'Defiant, spurning frown and foe,
With slackened rein swift Skittles rules the Row,' &c.

"All the follies and amusements of the town are passed in review by this stern but not unamusing censor. He takes us to the theatre—

'where saucy Wilton winks her way,
And says the more the less she has to say;
Or else where Robson, servile to the town,
Discards the Actor and adopts the Clown;
Where Toole or Compton, perfect in his part,
Touches each sense except the head and heart;
Where mobs 'recall' the wit of Rogers' wig,
Applaud a pun and recompense a jig.'

He takes us to a ball, and tells us that it is an auction-room. The comparison is drawn with some vigour.—CRITIC.

"We are no very great believers in the efficacy of satire. No doubt it would be easy to mention some productions of this class which have at different times exerted a good deal of influence. But this has been rather because they expressed opinions which had either been gradually maturing through a nation at large, or existed in great force among some influential faction. Ridicule may barb the weapon, but its direction is usually impressed by some deeper power. Abuses, however flagrant, which are either supported or but feebly opposed by popular feeling, are proof against wit, and the satirist of these, clever as he may be, *laudatur et alget*. His shaft, like the arrow in Virgil, which took fire as it shot through the sky, may mark its path with brilliancy, but, after all, accomplishes nothing, and the real work of reformation is done by causes entirely independent of his control.

"If cleverness, a considerable turn for epigram, and an unusual command of the Popean style of heroic verse, united with a good deal of truth, could reform the vices of London society, Mr. Austin might rank as an apostle. But as he himself says,—

> 'Who think by verse to better make the bad,
> I grant it freely, must be vain or mad.
> From Horace downwards, monitory rhymes
> Have but amused, and mended not the times.'

"When he explains why, under these circumstances, he comes forward as a satirist, his motive is not equally clear: we freely allow that he is amusing enough. The fairer half of creation he pursues from Rotten Row to the Opera and the other haunts of the upper ten thousand, with a relentless animosity which is perhaps as flattering to their power as it is offensive to their vanity. One of his principal points of animadversion is the topic which our contemporary, the *Morning Post*, brought into notice last season, and which then excited a transient amount of discussion—

the 'fast' ways of fashionable young ladies, especially their curiosity about notorious members of the *demi-monde*, and their tendency to attempt a sort of rivalry with them in the increased freedom of their manners and conversation.

"Mr. Austin defends his sex for what might be considered a want of taste in forsaking the society of the respectable classes for such as is mentioned in the foregoing extract:—

> 'Is it a marvel, Man's more liberal mood
> Should beat the wilds where nature rears her brood,
> Along forbidden border forests roam,
> Seeking the breeze he cannot find at home?
> Go, girls! to Church! believing all you hear,
> Think that their lack of virtue makes them dear,
> And heed not me who say that ban and bar
> Make you the stupid stunted things you are;
> That both would dearer, happier, better be,
> Had they your virtue, you their liberty.'

"He scolds them for their vanity of dress and person: . . . . . Then comes the ever fertile subject of mercenary marriages, the author's opinion of which, and, of their consequences, is illustrated by a story told after the fashion of the one in the 'New Timon.' In the description of the unmarried Blanche Darley there are some pretty lines. 'A cornet waltzes, but a colonel weds,' is really sublime in its antithesis, though not the best line in the satire. The 'Modern Muse,' who figures in the frontispiece in the guise of a remarkably well-developed young lady (?) before her dressing-glass, in a by no means complete state of attire, and engaged in the important occupation of powdering herself, has apparently presided over Mr. Austin's composition to some effect, if we may judge by the *décolletée* nature of some of his paragraphs. He has some lines on the ballet, which will raise a laugh in almost any masculine circle, but which must assuredly exclude the book from drawing-room

tables; though, if young ladies are what the author describes them, he has perhaps counted on being the more read, like the 'Essays and Reviews,' the more naughty he is said to be.

"Mr. Austin's verse is generally smooth. The versification is generally much above the average, as our specimens will have shown; and we can only regret, for the author's sake, that it is not likely to do more than amuse a few bachelor smoking-rooms. He does not pretend to be very desperately in earnest; and we conclude that he waltzes and flirts, and goes into what the ladies call 'all sort of places' just like anybody else. So he will not be much surprised to find that the world of fashion goes on very much the same as if he had not taken it to task."—PRESS.

"A very favourable specimen of the modern satire—keen, glittering, pungent, and clever. The diction is masculine in its texture, the rhythm free and flowing, and the author is mordacious enough, without trenching upon the boundaries of good taste, to make the vigorous lash he wields felt as his castigation goes on."—DISPATCH.

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